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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER

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U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 C.F.R. 1.5)

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09/937381

**TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371**

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/FR00/00703INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE
21 March 2000PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED
23 September 2001

TITLE OF INVENTION

HYBRID ARTICLES COMPRISING A RIGID PART AND A PART BASED ON A THERMOPLASTIC MATERIAL

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

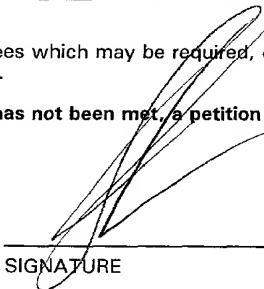
Didier CHOMIER; Vincent BOITTAUX

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and the PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).
4. A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.
5. A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. has been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US)
6. A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
7. Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))
 - a. are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. have been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. have not been made and will not be made.
8. A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

Items 11. to 16. below concern other document(s) or information included:

11. An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
 - A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
14. A substitute specification.
15. A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
16. Other items or information:

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known / see 37 C.F.R. 1.50) unassigned	INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.** 09/937381 PCT/FR00/00703	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER 022701-954	
17. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted:		CALCULATIONS	
Basic National Fee (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO \$1,000.00 (960) International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO \$860.00 (970) International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$710.00 (958) International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$690.00 (956) International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$100.00 (962) 			
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =		\$ 860.00	
Surcharge of \$130.00 (154) for furnishing the oath or declaration later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)). 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 <input type="checkbox"/>		\$	
Claims	Number Filed	Number Extra	Rate
Total Claims	21 -20 =	1	X\$18.00 (966) \$ 18.00
Independent Claims	3 -3 =	0	X\$80.00 (964) \$ 0
Multiple dependent claim(s) (if applicable)		+\$270.00 (968) \$ 0	
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =		\$ 878.00	
Reduction for 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable (see below).		\$ -	
SUBTOTAL =		\$ 878.00	
Processing fee of \$130.00 (156) for furnishing the English translation later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)). 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 <input type="checkbox"/>		\$	
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =		\$ 878.00	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 (581) per property +		\$	
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =		\$ 878.00	
Amount to be: refunded		\$	
charged		\$	
a. <input type="checkbox"/> Small entity status is hereby claimed.			
b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$ 878.00 to cover the above fees is enclosed.			
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. 02-4800 in the amount of \$ to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.			
d. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-4800. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.			
NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.			
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:			
Norman H. Stepno BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P. P.O. Box 1404 Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404 (703) 836-6620		 SIGNATURE <hr/> Teresa Stanek Rea NAME <hr/> 30,427 REGISTRATION NUMBER	

Patent
Attorney's Docket No. 022701-954

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of)
DIDIER CHOMIER et al) Group Art Unit: Unassigned
Application No.: Unassigned) Examiner: Unassigned
(Corresponds to PCT/FR00/00703))
International Filing Date: 21 March 2000)
For: HYBRID ARTICLES COMPRISING A)
RIGID PART AND A PART BASED)
ON A THERMOPLASTIC MATERIAL)

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

BOX PCT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to examination, please amend the above-captioned application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) An article comprising a part consisting of a rigid element (1) of elongate shape, at least one part of which has a cross section which has a profile defining a concave space, and comprising at least one part made of thermoplastic material (2) associated with the rigid element and positioned in the concave space of the rigid element, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material is in contact on at least two lines which are continuous in the longitudinal direction, and in that the part made of thermoplastic material has a cross section comprising at least one hollow (4).

2. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material positioned in the concave space of the rigid element (1) has a profile which is the conjugate of the concave space.

3. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 2, wherein the cross section of the rigid element is closed.

4. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the profile of the rigid element (10) is defined by at least one base (11) and two opposed walls (12a, 12b) defining two corners (14a, 14b) with the base and in that it comprises at least two parts made of thermoplastic material (15a, 15b) with hollow cross sections (18a, 18b) positioned in each corner, each of these parts resting along at least one portion of the base (16a, 16b) and at least one portion of the wall (17a, 17b) relative to the corner in which it is positioned.

5. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 3, wherein the profile of the rigid element is in the shape of a U or an I.

6. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 4, which comprises reinforcing ribs (20) made of thermoplastic material resting at least partly on the parts made of thermoplastic materials positioned in the corners defined by the walls and the base.

7. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, which is obtained by assembling a rigid element and at least one molded element made of thermoplastic material.

8. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 7, wherein the rigid element and the molded element are assembled by insetting, welding, bonding, riveting or clipping.

9. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material is shaped by molding inside the concave space.

10. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 9, wherein the shaping is performed by a fluid-injection technique.

11. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 9, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by the protrusion of thermoplastic material through perforations made in the rigid element.

12. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 9, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by complete or partial overmolding of the rigid element.

13. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the rigid element is a tubular or profiled metal component.

14. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic material is a polyamide.

15. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material of hollow cross section comprises means for letting a fluid into and out of the interior of the hollow part,

16. (Amended) A fluid-transfer device comprising the article as claimed in claim 1.

17. (Amended) The shield transfer device as claimed in claim 16, wherein the fluids are selected from the group consisting of air water, water containing glycol, fuels and oils.

18. (Amended) A method for producing motor vehicle front face components comprising using the article as claimed in claim 1.

19. (Amended) A heat-exchange device comprising the article as claimed in claim 1.

20. (Amended) A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space and

comprising at least one element made of a molded thermoplastic material, comprising at least the following steps:

- a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a preformed rigid element one cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- b) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold, and
- c) injecting a fluid or a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

21. (Amended) A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space and comprising at least one element made of a molded thermoplastic material, comprising at least the following steps:

- a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a rigid element that is to be preformed,
- b) preforming the rigid element by pressing or by hot forming in the mold, the preform having a cross section which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- c) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold, and
- d) injecting a fluid or a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing amendments are respectfully requested.

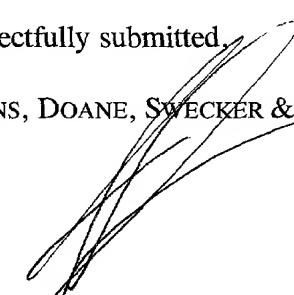
The claims have been amended to eliminate multiple dependency and to place them in better condition for U.S. patent practice.

Should the Examiner have any questions concerning the subject application, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

By:


Teresa Stanek Rea
Registration No. 30,427

P.O. Box 1404
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(703) 836-6620

Date: September 24, 2001

Attachment to Preliminary Amendment date September 24, 2001

1. (Amended) An article comprising a part consisting of a rigid element (1) of elongate shape, at least one part of which has a cross section which has a profile defining a concave space, and comprising at least one part made of thermoplastic material (2) associated with the rigid element and positioned in the concave space of the rigid element, [characterized in that] wherein the part made of thermoplastic material is in contact on at least two lines which are continuous in the longitudinal direction, and in that the part made of thermoplastic material has a cross section comprising at least one hollow (4).

2. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, [characterized in that] wherein the part made of thermoplastic material positioned in the concave space of the rigid element (1) has a profile which is the conjugate of the concave space.

3. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 2, [characterized in that] wherein the cross section of the rigid element is closed.

4. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 1, [characterized in that] wherein the profile of the rigid element (10) is defined by at least one base (11) and two opposed walls (12a, 12b) defining two corners (14a, 14b) with the base and in that it comprises at least two parts made of thermoplastic material (15a, 15b) with hollow cross sections (18a, 18b) positioned in each corner, each of these parts resting along at least one portion of the

Attachment to Preliminary Amendment date September 24, 2001

base (16a, 16b) and at least one portion of the wall (17a, 17b) relative to the corner in which it is positioned.

5. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 3, [characterized in that] wherein the profile of the rigid element is in the shape of a U or an I.

6. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of claims 4 or 5, characterized in that it] claim 4, which comprises reinforcing ribs (20) made of thermoplastic material resting at least partly on the parts made of thermoplastic materials positioned in the corners defined by the walls and the base.

7. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that it] claim 1, which is obtained by assembling a rigid element and at least one molded element made of thermoplastic material.

8. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 7, [characterized in that] wherein the rigid element and the molded element are assembled by insetting, welding, bonding, riveting or clipping.

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9. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material is shaped by molding inside the concave space.

10. (Amended) The article as claimed in claim 9, [characterized in that] wherein the shaping is performed by a fluid-injection[, preferably gas-injection,] technique.

11. (Amended) The article as claimed in [either of claims 9 and 10, characterized in that] claim 9, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by the protrusion of thermoplastic material through perforations made in the rigid element.

12. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of claims 9 to 11, characterized in that] claim 9, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by complete or partial overmolding of the rigid element.

13. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the rigid element is a tubular or profiled metal component.

Attachment to Preliminary Amendment date September 24, 2001

14. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic material is a polyamide.

15. (Amended) The article as claimed in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the part made of thermoplastic material of hollow cross section comprises means for letting a fluid into and out of the interior of the hollow part,

16. (Amended) [The use of an article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 15 in a] A fluid-transfer device comprising the article as claimed in claim 1.

17. (Amended) The [use] shield transfer device as claimed in claim 16, [characterized in that] wherein the fluids are [chosen] selected from the group consisting of air water, water containing glycol, fuels and oils.

18. (Amended) [The use of an article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 15] A method for producing motor vehicle front face components comprising using the article as claimed in claim 1.

19. (Amended) [The use of an article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 15 in a] A heat-exchange device comprising the article as claimed in claim 1.

Attachment to Preliminary Amendment date September 24, 2001

20. (Amended) A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space and comprising at least one element made of a molded thermoplastic material, [characterized in that it comprises] comprising at least the following steps:

- a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a preformed rigid element one cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- b) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold, and
- c) injecting a fluid[, preferably] or a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

21. (Amended) A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space and comprising at least one element made of a molded thermoplastic material, [characterized in that it comprises] comprising at least the following steps:

- a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a rigid element that is to be preformed,
- b) preforming the rigid element by pressing or by hot forming in the mold, the preform having a cross section which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- c) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold, and
- d) injecting a fluid[, preferably] or a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

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Hybrid articles comprising a rigid part and a part
based on a thermoplastic material

The present invention relates to the production of
5 articles comprising at least one rigid element and at
least one element consisting of a thermoplastic
material obtained by molding.

In the fields of industry relating to the
fabrication of manufactured objects, for example in the
10 building, furnishing, automobile and consumer-goods
fields, the articles produced have in general to be
light in weight and to have the properties needed for
use, particularly sufficiently good mechanical
properties. In order to meet these specifications, the
15 choice of the materials and the shape conferred upon
them are determining factors.

The past few decades have seen the development of
the use of plastics, for example in the automobile or
construction fields, which are lighter in weight and
20 easier to work than metals. It is thus possible to
fabricate lightweight articles with complex shapes, for
example by injecting a molten polymer into a mold.

However, the use of plastics may, in certain
areas, be limited. For example, the production of large
25 components may pose problems of dimensional stability,
particularly in applications where they are subjected

to variations in temperature or to vibration. This is the case in particular in the automotive sphere, for certain components located under the hood. Furthermore, the components made of plastic may have mechanical 5 properties which are not good enough for the application considered.

In order to overcome this type of difficulty it is known practice for various materials, for example metal elements and elements made of thermoplastic material to 10 be combined. Numerous publications exist regarding structures that can be adopted for adapting components comprising plastics and additional elements suitable for the use for which they are intended. By way of example, mention may be made of the published patent 15 application DE-4334049 which teaches the insertion of metal components in sheets of plastic, published patent application DE-4330273 which teaches the reinforcing of plastic window frames using profiled metal rods.

Published patent application EP 370342 teaches the 20 reinforcing of a metal structure of U-shaped profile with ribs made of thermoplastic material injected into the metal structure.

The objective of the present invention is to propose novel articles in which at least one element 25 consisting of a thermoplastic material and one rigid element, for example made of metal, are combined, the

articles according to this structure in particular having good dimensional stability and good impact behavior.

To this end, the invention proposes an article
5 comprising a part consisting of a rigid element of elongate shape, at least one part of which has a cross section which has a profile defining a concave space, and comprising at least one part made of thermoplastic material associated with the rigid element and
10 positioned in the concave space, characterized in that the part made of thermoplastic material is in contact on at least two lines which are continuous in the longitudinal direction, and in that the part made of thermoplastic material has a cross section comprising
15 at least one hollow.

The part made of thermoplastic material can be used as a reinforcement of a lightweight rigid element, for example for producing building elements. These building elements are generally of straight or curved
20 elongate shape, in the form of shells or tubular, consisting of one or more segments. Examples of such articles that may be mentioned are beams and girders. The preferred areas of application for this type of article are the building, furnishing and automotive
25 construction fields, for producing structural components intended to support other components. The

articles reinforced in that way have the advantage of being light in weight while at the same time maintaining mechanical properties which are good enough, for example, to support other structures. In 5 particular, the rigid element allows the loads to be spread over the entirety of the article and the part made of thermoplastic material reinforces the article.

The part of the article made of thermoplastic material may have numerous functions, the rigid element 10 serving to reinforce or to stabilize the shape made of thermoplastic material. The part made of thermoplastic material may have a highly complex structure with, for example, spaces for accommodating other components, reinforcing ribs, means of assembly with other 15 components or systems, for example clips. The rigid element may be fully incorporated into the structure defined by the part made of thermoplastic material, may be visible or may be completely inserted into the thermoplastic material. It may be used as a simple 20 structure reinforcing element or have functions of its own. It may, for example, have means of assembly with other components. Such structures have better dimensional stability than structures made solely from thermoplastic materials. The dimensional variations of 25 the plastic parts are in fact limited by those of the rigid element with which they are in contact. It is

thus possible to produce very large components based on a thermoplastic material. Another advantage of such structures is the improvement in the impact behavior, that is to say the ability of an object not to be

5 broken into several parts after an impact. The articles according to this embodiment are therefore particularly suited to the production of automotive components, for example the production of front faces.

The articles according to the invention can be
10 used as they are as consumer goods or may be combined with other components, elements or systems, for example by bonding, welding, riveting, insetting or clipping.

The article according to the invention may in particular comprise one or more parts made of
15 thermoplastic material and the cross section of which has at least one hollow. If it has several of these, the parts made of thermoplastic material may be materially separated or form part of one and the same material element made of thermoplastic material. Thus,
20 two parts made of thermoplastic material of hollow cross section, positioned in the concave space may, for example, be joined together by a base made of thermoplastic material. The connecting means may be contained inside or outside the concave space of the
25 rigid element. The elements made of thermoplastic material are generally shaped by molding.

The rigid element has a straight or curved elongate shape. It may also have several essentially elongate portions separated for example by elbows or changes in curvature. It is possible, for these shapes,

- 5 to define a cross section perpendicular to the longitudinal direction. The rigid element and the part made of thermoplastic material are in contact along at least two lines which are continuous in the longitudinal direction. The lines of contact may be
- 10 straight, curved, parallel to the longitudinal direction or at an angle to this direction. The expression "contact along at least two lines" is to be understood as meaning that, for any cross section, the rigid element and the part made of thermoplastic
- 15 material are in contact at least at two points on the profile defining the concave space. The rigid element and the part made of thermoplastic material are preferably in contact along continuous surfaces.

The part made of thermoplastic material and the

- 20 rigid element are advantageously in contact over the entirety of the profile or over portions of the profile, preferably over at least two portions. The part made of thermoplastic material may, for example, rest on the rigid element on continuous strips of
- 25 contact.

The part made of thermoplastic material and positioned in the concave space of the rigid element is hollow, that is to say that, over at least one part, it has a cross section that has a space which is 5 completely surrounded by thermoplastic material.

According to a first embodiment of the invention, the article comprises a part made of thermoplastic material having a profile that is the conjugate of the concave space defined by the profile of the rigid 10 element. According to this embodiment, the part made of thermoplastic material fills the concave space fully or to a large extent, the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element being in contact over the entirety or over the majority of the section.

15 For this first embodiment, the rigid elements comprise, for example, a part in the shape of a U, a V, a semicircle, possibly with flats. The rigid elements may also have a closed cross section. The expression "closed cross section" is to be understood as meaning 20 any geometric shape for which it is possible to define a perimeter such as a circle, a rectangle with right-angled or rounded corners, an ellipse, an oval, etc. The rigid element may, for example, be tubular. The concave space is therefore defined by the space 25 situated inside the perimeter.

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According to a second embodiment of the invention, the article comprises at least two hollow parts made of thermoplastic material and the profile of the rigid element is defined by at least one base and two opposed 5 walls defining corners in which each of the parts is positioned. Each part made of thermoplastic material rests against the base and one of the walls, the wall relative to the corner in which the part made of thermoplastic material is positioned. For this 10 embodiment, the rigid element advantageously comprises, on at least one part, a section with a profile in the shape of a U or an I. The two parts for example have a tubular shape.

The article may advantageously comprise 15 reinforcing ribs made of thermoplastic material, resting at least partly on the parts made of thermoplastic material positioned in the corners. For example, the ribs are preferably in the form of zig-zags or Xs, or consist of parallel panels connecting 20 the parts positioned in the corners. They are preferably produced during the step of shaping the thermoplastic material, the hollow parts and the ribs forming one selfsame element.

The articles according to the invention may be 25 produced by assembling the rigid element with one or more preformed elements made of thermoplastic material.

The elements may, for example, be secured by embossing, welding, bonding, riveting or clipping.

The articles may advantageously be produced by molding parts made of thermoplastic material inside the 5 concave space. The thermoplastic material may have parts extending beyond the concave space, in addition to the hollow parts. The molding techniques are well known to those skilled in the part. To perform shaping inside the concave space, the rigid element is, for 10 example, placed in a mold of suitable shape then liquid thermoplastic material is injected.

The articles according to the invention may, for example, be fabricated using a fluid-injection method. The expression "fluid-injection" is to be understood as 15 meaning any method comprising a step in which a fluid, for example a gas or water, is injected into a mass of molten polymer to create a cavity therein. All embodiments which can fall under this heading can be used in the context of the invention.

20 Among these methods, the gas-injection technique, which is developing strongly, may be used. In brief, this technique consists, in a first embodiment, in injecting into a mold of a shape corresponding to that of the component that is to be molded, a certain amount 25 of material which is not enough to completely fill the mold. Then, a needle is introduced, at one or more

points, into the mass thus injected so that a gas can be fed in under pressure. The gas will generate a cavity in the injected molten mass, forcing the polymer to hug the walls of the mold. After cooling, the 5 component is released from the mold. In a second embodiment, the mold is completely filled with the thermoplastic composition, gas under pressure is injected into said mass to expel some of the material from the mold and thus form a cavity while at the same 10 time keeping some of the material against the walls of the mold until such time as this material sets or solidifies.

These techniques are used in particular for producing thick-walled components or for reducing the 15 amount of material in solid components.

By way of an example of a description of a gas-injection method, mention may be made of the article entitled "Gas Injection Molding : Current Practices" by S. SHAH published in the journal "ANTEC - 91" - pages 20 1494 to 1506.

Applications of this technique and examples of components produced using it are given in the article entitled "Gas Injection Molding : Structural application", by S. SHAH and D. HLAVATY, published in 25 the same journal as above on pages 1479 - 1493.

A description of the gas-injection methods known under the tradename CINPRES is also given in the article "IM Alternatives Produce Performance Advantages" by John Theverge published in the February 5 1991 edition of "Plastics Engineering" (pages 27 - 31).

Mention may also be made of the article "Neue Möglichkeiten beim Spritzgiessen durch das Gasinnendruckverfahren [New ways of injection molding using the gas internal pressure process]" by B. KLOTZ 10 and E. BÜRKLE published in *Kunststoffe* 79 (1989) No. 11, pages 1102 - 1107.

The articles according to the invention may, for example, be produced according to a method comprising the following steps:

- 15 a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a preformed rigid element one cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- b) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold,
- 20 c) injecting a fluid, preferably a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

Another method that is suitable for the invention consists in shaping the rigid element in the tool for 25 molding the element made of the thermoplastic material,

such a method comprising, for example, the following steps:

- a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a rigid element that is to be preformed,
- 5 b) preforming the rigid element by pressing or by hot forming in the mold, the preform having a cross section which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- 10 c) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold,
- d) injecting a fluid, preferably a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

According to another embodiment of the invention, 15 the articles according to the invention are fabricated using an extrusion-blow-molding method.

The rigid element and the element made of thermoplastic material may be secured by any known means, for example bonding, riveting or overmolding. A 20 particularly advantageous means of securing is for the injected material to protrude through perforations made in the rigid element. Another particularly advantageous means is for the rigid element to be completely or partially overmolded with the element made of 25 thermoplastic material.

According to a preferred embodiment, the rigid element is a metal component. It may, for example, be obtained by pressing a metal plate or sheet. Steel sheet, particularly those which have not been treated or galvanized and/or primed and possibly treated with an adhesion promoter, and aluminum sheets which have not been treated or anodized and/or primed and possibly treated with an adhesion promoter are particularly well suited.

10 According to another embodiment, use may be made, by way of rigid elements, of sheets of plastic shaped by hot pressing and which are made up of thermoplastics into which may be inserted plies of glass fibers or plies of synthetic fibers, such as laminates.

15 To produce components according to the invention, use may be made of any thermoplastics that can be shaped by molding and, more particularly, by fluid-injection methods. By way of example, mention may be made of partially crystalline plastics such as nylon-6, 20 nylon-6,6, polybutylene terephthalate, polyphthalamide, polyphenylene sulfide, semiaromatic polyamides, and polypropylene.

Use may also be made of any composition produced from these materials. It is advantageously possible to 25 use compositions which are reinforced, for example with fillers chosen from the group comprising glass fibers,

mineral fibers, for example wollastonite, ceramic fibers, heat-resistant organic fibers such as polyphthalamide fibers, inorganic fillers such as kaolin, lamellar silicates, possibly modified, such as 5 montmorillonite, and fluoromicas. The compositions may comprise all additives conventionally used on polyamide-based compositions used for the fabrication of molded articles. Thus, by way of example of additives, mention may be made of heat stabilizers, UV 10 stabilizers, antioxidants, lubricants, pigments, colorants, plasticizers or impact modifiers. By way of example, the antioxidants and heat stabilizers are, for example, alkali-metal halides, copper halides, sterically hindered phenolic compounds, and aromatic 15 amines. The UV stabilizers are generally benzotriazoles, benzophenones or HALSs.

By way of particularly suitable applications for such lightweight structural elements mention may be made of strong elements for motor vehicle doors, bumper 20 supports, front and rear faces for motor vehicles, and the lower parts of vehicle bodies. These articles generally are required to have great solidity and good rigidity.

The hollow part of the element made of 25 thermoplastic material may advantageously be used to transfer fluids, for example air, water, glycol-

containing water, fuels and oil. For this purpose, the part made of thermoplastic material of hollow cross section may comprise means for letting fluids into and out of the interior of the hollow part. The components 5 thus produced may be used in a fluid-transfer device. The articles according to the invention may also be used to produce heat exchangers, for example for producing motor vehicle radiators, the fluid that needs to be cooled flowing through the hollow part of the 10 element made of thermoplastic material and the heat exchange being with the external surroundings. If the article comprises several hollow parts made of thermoplastic material, these various parts may be used for transferring fluids of different natures.

15 Other details or advantages of the invention will become more clearly apparent in the light of the example given hereinbelow and purely by way of indication and illustrated in Figures 1 to 3 in which:

Figure 1 depicts a three-dimensional part view of 20 an article according to a first embodiment of the invention.

Photo 1 depicts an article according to the first embodiment.

Figure 2 depicts a cross section through an 25 article according to a second embodiment of the invention.

Figure 3 depicts a three-dimensional part view of an article according to a third embodiment of the invention.

Figure 1 depicts a three-dimensional part view of 5 an article according to a first embodiment of the invention. The article comprises a rigid element 1 of rectilinear elongate shape and a part made of thermoplastic material 2. The rigid element is a pressed sheet with a U-shaped section, the ends of 10 which U each have a flat 3. The region lying between the branches of the U defines a concave space in which the part made of thermoplastic material is placed. The shape of the part made of thermoplastic material is the conjugate of that of the rigid element. The part made 15 of thermoplastic material placed inside the concave space has a hollow 4. The assembly has excellent rigidity. The means of securing the rigid element and the part made of thermoplastic material together are not depicted in this figure; they are visible in 20 photo 1.

Curve 1 represents the bending curves, obtained under the same conditions, for various structures: a structure according to the first embodiment, a structure according to document EP 370342, and a 25 structure having only the metal profile. The X-axis

represents the displacement in mm, and the Y-axis represents the force in N.

The article depicted in figure 1 may, for example, be produced by placing the rigid element 1 in an injection mold of chosen shape so that a fluid can be injected into the space located between the walls of the mold and the interior walls of the rigid element defining the dish shape. Molten nylon-6,6 is injected into this shape, then gaseous nitrogen is injected into the mass of molten polyamide using nozzles situated in the mold at the two ends of the location where the rigid element is held. Once the polyamide has solidified, the fabricated article is released from the mold. The part made of thermoplastic material 2 has a hollow 4.

Figure 2 depicts a cross section through an article according to a second embodiment. The article comprises a rigid element 10 in the shape of a U, with a base 11 and two opposed walls 12a, 12b forming the two branches of the U. The ends of the U have flats 13. The base and the walls form corners 14a; 14b. The article comprises two parts made of thermoplastic material 15a; 15b each positioned at least partly in the corners 14a; 14b. Each of the two parts made of thermoplastic material bears against the base 16a; 16b and against that wall relating to the corner in which

it is positioned 17a; 17b. Each of the parts positioned in the corners has a tubular portion with a hollow 18a; 18b. The means of securing the rigid element and the part made of thermoplastic material together are not 5 depicted in this figure.

Figure 3 depicts a three-dimensional part view of an article according to a third embodiment of the invention. The profile of the article according to this embodiment is similar to the one depicted in figure 2. 10 The article additionally comprises reinforcing ribs 20 between the two parts made of thermoplastic material which are positioned in the corners. The rigid element and the parts made of thermoplastic material are secured by some thermoplastic material protruding 21 15 through an orifice pierced in the rigid element.

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CLAIMS

1. An article comprising a part consisting of a rigid element (1) of elongate shape, at least one part of which has a cross section which has a profile defining a concave space, and comprising at least one part made of thermoplastic material (2) associated with the rigid element and positioned in the concave space of the rigid element, characterized in that the part made of thermoplastic material is in contact on at least two lines which are continuous in the longitudinal direction, and in that the part made of thermoplastic material has a cross section comprising at least one hollow (4).
- 15 2. The article as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the part made of thermoplastic material positioned in the concave space of the rigid element (1) has a profile which is the conjugate of the concave space.
- 20 3. The article as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the cross section of the rigid element is closed.
- 25 4. The article as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the profile of the rigid element (10) is defined by at least one base (11) and two opposed walls (12a, 12b) defining two corners (14a,

14b) with the base and in that it comprises at least two parts made of thermoplastic material (15a, 15b) with hollow cross sections (18a, 18b) positioned in each corner, each of these parts resting along at least 5 one portion of the base (16a, 16b) and at least one portion of the wall (17a, 17b) relative to the corner in which it is positioned.

5. The article as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that the profile of the rigid element 10 is in the shape of a U or an I.

6. The article as claimed in one of claims 4 or 5, characterized in that it comprises reinforcing ribs (20) made of thermoplastic material resting at least partly on the parts made of thermoplastic 15 materials positioned in the corners defined by the walls and the base.

7. The article as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that it is obtained by assembling a rigid element and at least one molded 20 element made of thermoplastic material.

8. The article as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the rigid element and the molded element are assembled by insetting, welding, bonding, riveting or clipping.

25 9. The article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the part made of

thermoplastic material is shaped by molding inside the concave space.

10. The article as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that the shaping is performed by a 5 fluid-injection, preferably gas-injection, technique.

11. The article as claimed in either of claims 9 and 10, characterized in that the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by the protrusion of thermoplastic material 10 through perforations made in the rigid element.

12. The article as claimed in one of claims 9 to 11, characterized in that the part made of thermoplastic material and the rigid element are secured by complete or partial overmolding of the rigid 15 element.

13. The article as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the rigid element is a tubular or profiled metal component.

14. The article as claimed in one of the 20 preceding claims, characterized in that the thermoplastic material is a polyamide.

15. The article as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the part made 25 of thermoplastic material of hollow cross section comprises means for letting a fluid into and out of the interior of the hollow part.

16. The use of an article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 15 in a fluid-transfer device.

17. The use as claimed in claim 16, characterized in that the fluids are chosen from air, 5 water, water containing glycol, fuels and oils.

18. The use of an article as claimed in one of claims 1 to 15 for producing motor vehicle front face components.

19. The use of an article as claimed in one 10 of claims 1 to 15 in a heat-exchange device.

20. A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space and comprising at least one element made of a molded 15 thermoplastic material, characterized in that it comprises at least the following steps:

a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a preformed rigid element one cross section of which has at least one part defining a concave space,

20 b) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold,

c) injecting a fluid, preferably a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.

25 21. A method for fabricating an article comprising at least one rigid element a cross section

of which has at least one part defining a concave space and comprising at least one element made of a molded thermoplastic material, characterized in that it comprises at least the following steps:

- 5 a) arranging, in an injection mold of chosen shape, a rigid element that is to be preformed,
- b) preforming the rigid element by pressing or by hot forming in the mold, the preform having a cross section which has at least one part defining a concave space,
- 10 c) injecting molten thermoplastic material into the mold,
- d) injecting a fluid, preferably a gas, through a needle into the molten thermoplastic material present in the concave space of the rigid element.



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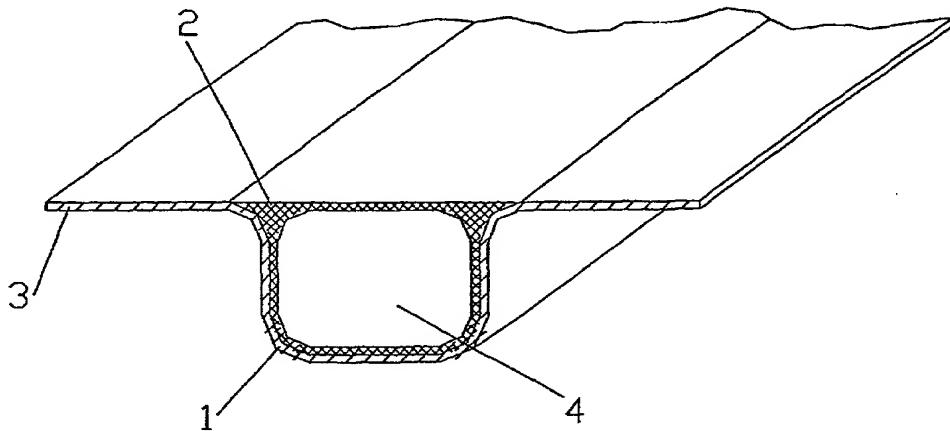
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(54) Title: MIXED ARTICLES COMPRISING A RIGID PART AND A PART BASED ON A THERMOPLASTIC MATERIAL

(54) Titre: ARTICLES MIXTES COMPRENANT UNE PARTIE RIGIDE ET UNE PARTIE A BASE D'UN MATERIAU THERMOPLASTIQUE



(57) Abstract

The invention concerns the production of articles comprising at least a rigid element (1) and at least an element (2) made of a thermoplastic material obtained by moulding. The rigid element (1) has a profiled transverse section defining a concave space, wherein is positioned at least partly an element made of thermoplastic material.

(57) Abrégé

L'invention concerne la réalisation d'articles comportant au moins un élément rigide (1) et au moins un élément (2) constitué de matière thermoplastique obtenu par moulage. L'élément rigide (1) présente une section transversale profilée définissant un espace concave, dans lequel est positionnée au moins une partie de l'élément en matière thermoplastique.

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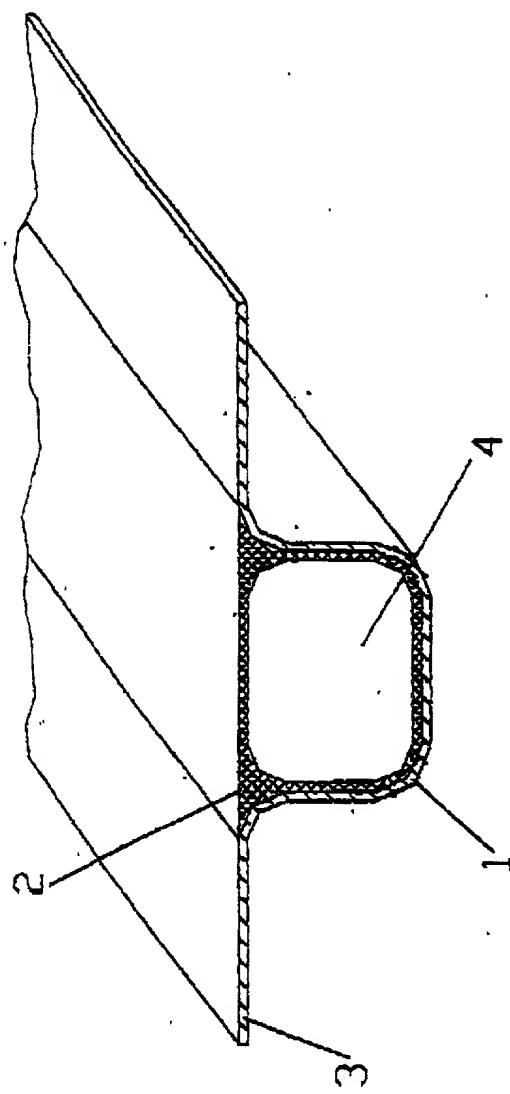


Figure 1

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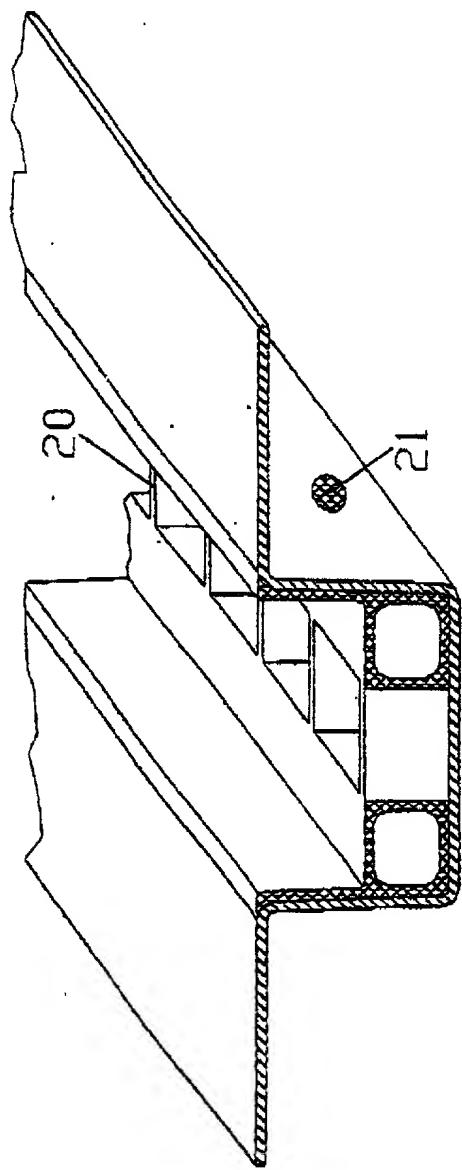
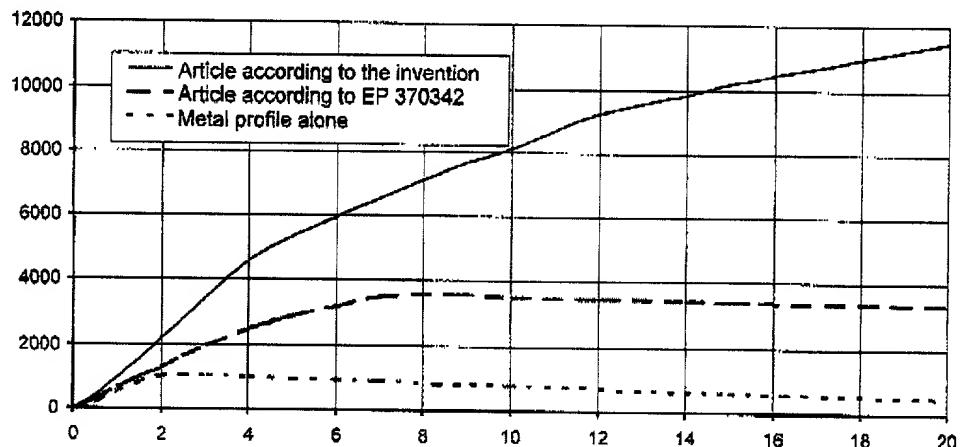


Figure 3

REPLACEMENT SHEET (RULE 26)

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Curve 1

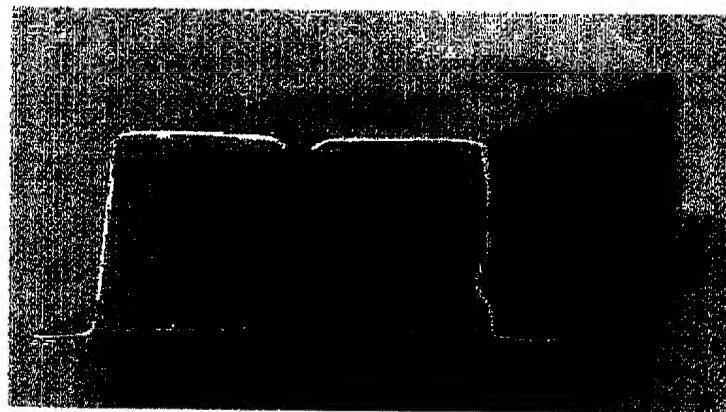


Photo 1

**COMBINED DECLARATION FOR PATENT APPLICATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY
(Includes Reference to Provisional and PCT International Applications)**

Attorney's Docket No.

022701-954

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name:
I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

HYBRID ARTICLES COMPRISING A RIGID PART AND A PART BASED ON A THERMOPLASTIC MATERIAL

the specification of which (check only one item below):

is attached hereto.
 was filed as United States application

Number _____
on _____
and was amended
on _____ (if applicable).

was filed as PCT international application

Number PCT/FR00/00703
on 21 March 2000
and was amended
on _____ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 (a)-(e) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below and have also identified below any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America filed by me on the same subject matter having a filing date before that of the application(s) of which priority is claimed:

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COUNTRY (if PCT, indicate "PCT")	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	PRIORITY CLAIMED UNDER 35 U.S.C. §119
France	99/03766	23 March 1999	<u>X</u> Yes No
France	99/16711	30 December 1999	<u>X</u> Yes No
			Yes No
			Yes No
			Yes No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below.

(Application Number)

(Filing Date)

(Application Number)

(Filing Date)

COMBINED DECLARATION FOR PATENT APPLICATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
 (Includes Reference to Provisional and PCT International Applications)

Attorney's Docket No.

022701-954

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States applications(s) or PCT international application(s) designating the United States of America that is/are listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in that/those prior application(s) in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me to be material to the patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations §1.56, which became available between the filing date of the prior application(s) and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

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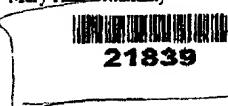
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U.S. APPLICATION NUMBER	U.S. FILING DATE	PATENTED	PENDING	ABANDONED

PCT APPLICATIONS DESIGNATING THE U.S.

PCT APPLICATION NO.	PCT FILING DATE	U.S. APPLICATION NUMBERS ASSIGNED (if any)

I hereby appoint the following attorneys and agent(s) to prosecute said application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith and to file, prosecute and to transact all business in connection with international applications directed to said invention:

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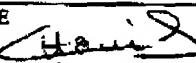
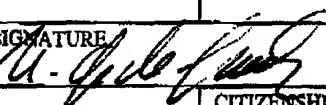
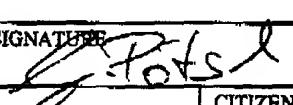
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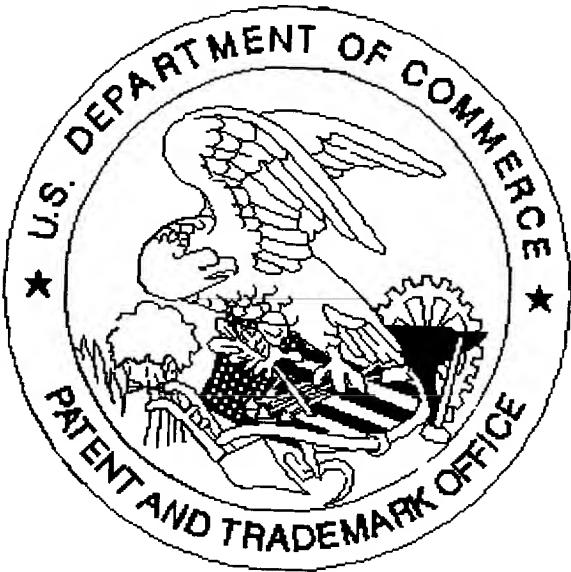
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Address all telephone calls to: Norman H. Stepno at (703) 836-6620.

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COMBINED DECLARATION FOR PATENT APPLICATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY (CONT'D) (Includes Reference to Provisional and PCT International Applications)		Attorney's Docket No. 022701-954
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